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Families on the move

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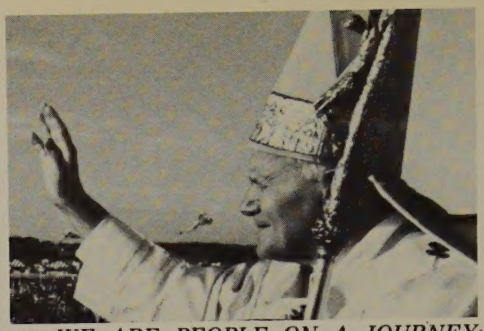

4 *WE ARE PEOPLE ON A JOURNEY: Following Pope John Paul II during his trip to Canada, we travel now to Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia where the Pope urges all to authentic witness in the world today.*

7 *CALL ANY COUNTRY OUR HO Experiences of families on the move have opened their hearts out onto the w*

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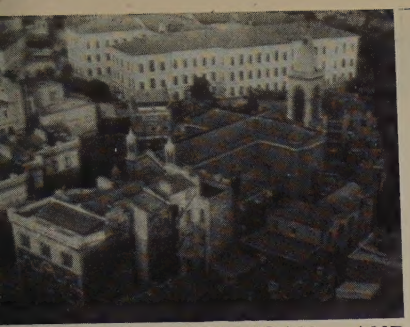

RTHODOX, ANGLICAN AND ATHOLIC BISHOPS IN ISTANBUL: n informal meeting of bishops took place n the theme "Jesus Crucified and orsaken"

23 *THE CHURCH AND LIFE— "The need for a global commitment": An interview with Msgr. James McHugh, Advisor to the UN on population matters.*

26 *THE YOUNG AND THE GOSPEL: Experiences of life shared by the young.*

CONTENTS

Chiara Lubich	The norm of norms	2
Pope John Paul II	We are people on a journey	4
Mary Cass and Mariele Quartana	Call any country our home	7
Gabriella Fallacara	Orthodox, Anglican, Catholic Bishops in Istanbul	13
	In the light of the present moment	17

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Word of life	20
Experiences of life	21
Images for words	22
The Church and life	23
Young and the Gospel	26
No 'extra embellishments', thank you	28

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The norm of norms

You have explained to us (see Living City vol. 24 n.1) how the spirituality of the Focolare Movement is a collective spirituality, different from other more individualistic spiritualities existing in the Church. In the spiritual life of the Movement, in fact, people go to God loving their neighbor, or better, together with their neighbor. You mentioned that the Second Vatican Council, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, urged Christians to go out towards all people.

How does one put into practice the spiritual way of the Movement that so strongly underlines love of neighbor and has been defined as a collective way?

Those who, in other spiritualities, look for God within themselves are like people in a garden of flowers. They look at and admire one flower: they admire, love and adore God within themselves.

We felt that God was asking us to look at many flowers, because God is present, or can be present, in every person.

Just as I should love God in myself when I am alone, in the same way I should love God in my neighbors when they are near me.

Unlike other spiritualities wherein one flees from the world, my desire is to seek Christ in the world; I enjoy solitude but also company; silence, but also communicating with others.

Travelling along this way, if each person loves Christ in his or her neighbor, love is mutual, and Jesus' new commandment "Love one another as I have loved you"[1] is fulfilled. Unity is accomplished. The words of the Gospel are realized: "Where two or three are gathered in my name (which means in his love) there am I in their midst."[2] Christ is spiritually present. The members of the Movement constantly strive to merit this presence of Christ.

When Jesus is the reason for our gathering together, we become one as God is one; but we are not alone, just as God, though one, is not alone because he is Love.

When two people meet together in this way, they live according to the model of the Trinity; they are in relationship to one another as the Father and the Son and among them the Holy Spirit bursts forth with his gifts, the Holy Spirit, the soul of the Mystical Body.

For those who have made this collective way their own, this 'trinitarian' way of life —with the presence of Jesus the Risen Lord in their midst—is not simply an arrival point. It is a departure point.

In the first letter of Saint Peter we read: "Above all have mutual and constant love".[3]

If, in fact, there is not mutual love at the basis of everything we do, nothing has value. Saint Paul says that speaking all languages, giving away everything to the poor has no value[4] if there is not love. Therefore, we aim first of all at love which brings about unity.

The presence of Jesus that comes about through mutual love among two or more people is, in the statutes of the Movement, not just one of the articles, it is *the* article which is the premise to all the others. It is the rule of rules. It says: "The focolarini must see that they always merit the fulfillment of Jesus promise to those who are united in his name: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst.' Mutual and constant love, which generates the presence of Jesus in the midst of the collectivity is, for the focolarini, the inspirational idea behind all of their activities. In their spiritual and apostolic life it is for them the norm of norms, the premise before any other rule."[5]

The presence of Jesus in the midst of the members of the movement, once they have learned how to establish it, is obligatory.

It is only upon this foundation that we can build.

Chiara Lubich

1) Jn. 13:34; 2) Mt. 18:20; 3) 1 Pt. 4:8; 4) cfr. 1 Cor. 13:1-3; 5) Statutes of the Work of Mary, Part 1, art. 2-9.

"We are people on a journey"

Continuing our publication of excerpts from the Pope's talks in Canada which gave important points for thought, study and meditation for all, we follow him now to the most easterly regions of that country.

Pope John Paul II's visit to Canada brought him also to the Maritime Provinces. On September 12 he flew to St. John's, Newfoundland and from there he went to the fishing port of Flatrock where fishermen in their boats awaited his words and his blessing.

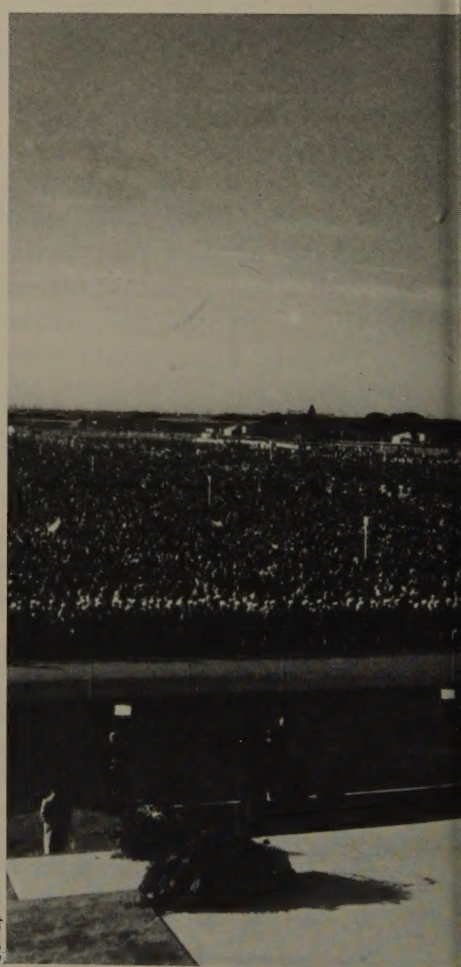
His talk stressed the primacy of the person when it comes to production. He recognized the difficulties facing this particular industry today, the insecurity coming from the changed conditions in the fishing industry and in the world economy, the problem of unemployment: "Prolonged failure to find meaningful employment represents an affront to the dignity of the individual, for which no social assistance can fully compensate...." He had come, as he stated in his talk, to express his solidarity.... "I join in the appeal to all involved to work together to find appropriate solutions to the problems at hand, including a re-structuring of the economy, so that human needs be put before mere financial gain. The social doctrine of the Church requires us to emphasize the primacy of the human person in the productive process, the primacy of people over things....

"The current economic situation, especially with regard to fishing, demands courageous decisions in order to overcome all negative consequences. Our Christian view of man and what constitutes his good must be the guiding principle in looking for alternate solutions. The promotion of cooperatives of fishermen, collective agreements between workers and management, some form of joint ownership or partnership —these are some possible solutions that would aim at ensuring that the workers have a voice in the decision-making affecting their own lives and the lives of their families."

In his homily to the crowd gathered for the Mass celebrated in Moncton, New Brunswick, the Pope pointed out that the crisis of values demands authentic witnesses.

"If our life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all, or the spirit that we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy, then be united in your convictions and united in your love... That is one thing which would make me completely happy, There must be no competition among you... so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people's interests instead. In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:1-5).

These words, originally addressed by St. Paul to the Christians of Philippi, are also addressed to you.... I encourage you to form human communities that will be examples in their practice of solidarity. I urge you to maintain in your Church communities the dignity vested in them by Christ. Draw your inspiration in this from the Gospel; look for what is just in the eyes of God. Have the courage of faith, the dynamism of charity and the strength of Christian hope, whatever be your trials.



Canapress

Yes, open your communities to the Spirit of Christ....

Urban life is developing, an economic crisis affects the local communities, and likewise, a spiritual crisis, a crisis of values. Meanwhile, you can look to the future with serenity if you stand firm in the faith of the Risen Christ, if you allow his spirit to form within you the responses to the new challenges, if you show solidarity with one another, if you accept being a leaven in the Church and in society....

Efforts in sharing, justice and charity—which one can call "social love"—run the risk of becoming simple philanthropy if they are not rooted in spiritual energy....

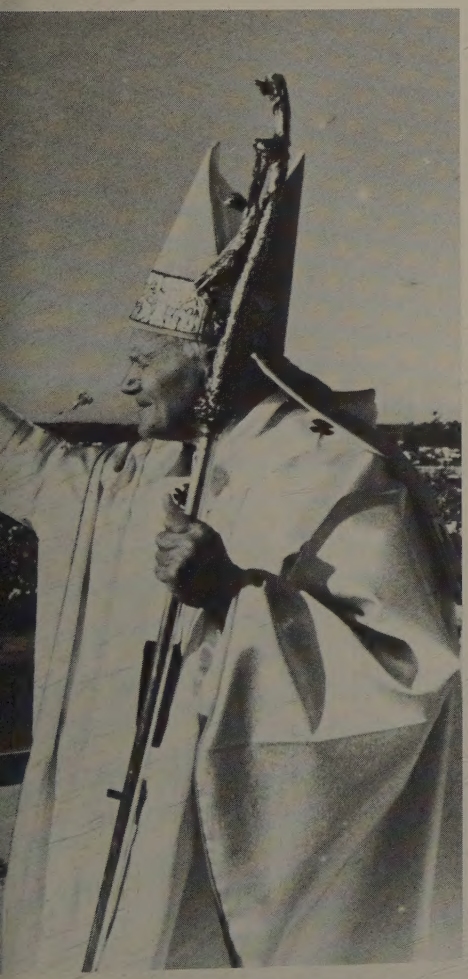
"Efforts in sharing, justice and charity ... run the risk of becoming simple philanthropy if they are not rooted in spiritual energy."

But it is evident that a well-understood faith involves commitments of charity and which today might be called:
—respect for persons, of their freedom, of their dignity, so that they may not be crushed by the new social constraints;
—respect for human rights including the right to life from the moment of conception, the right to one's reputation, the right to development, the right to freedom of conscience;
—the refusal of violence and torture;
—concern for the less fortunate categories;...
—establishment of social measures for greater equality and justice, for all men and women, regardless of individual interests or privileges;
—the will to live a simple life and to share, in contrast with the present race for profit, consumption and artificial gratification, in such a way as not to be deprived of what is essential for oneself, while also permitting the poor, whoever they may be, to lead a dignified life;
—a more universal openness towards the basic needs of the less fortunate countries, the regions where each day thousands of human beings die because of the lack of peace or elementary care given to them; and hence concern to inaugurate, at the international level, effective solutions for a more equitable distribution of goods and opportunities on the earth;
—missionary zeal for help among the Churches.

Thus your communities will be able to provide a generous sharing that begins in the immediate neighborhood and that then opens up, without boundaries, to the world....

With the Christian motivation which sees in the other person a brother or sister in God and a member of Christ, you will be the leaven that raises the dough to a level of greater justice, fraternal solidarity and social love....

All must be vigilant for unity within the common mission of evangelization, and here the parish plays a unique role. For all groups the parish's vocation "is to be a fraternal and welcoming family home, where ►



Pope John Paul II waves to acres of people gathered for the celebration of the Eucharist at an airfield in Namao, Alberta.

those who have been baptized and confirmed become aware of forming the People of God.... From that home they are sent out day by day to their apostolic mission in all the centers of activity of the life of the world" (cf. Catechesi Tradendae).

Dear brothers and sisters: we are a people on a journey. We toil here below with courage and strong love to construct a new world more open to God and more fraternal, one that offers some sketch of the world to come (cf. Guadium et Spes). Let us take care not to forget the fullness to which God calls us!

On September 13, John Paul II went to the Cathedral in Halifax, Nova Scotia to meet with priests, religious and lay people involved in the apostolate.

The idea of service, dear brothers and sisters, is essential to the lay apostolate, and to all ministry. Service is at the very core of every vocation in the Church: the service of God and our neighbor which is both zealous and humble, always motivated by a desire to fulfill God's will manifested through the guiding action of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church....

As lay people you are called to bear witness to Christ within the context of your homes, neighborhoods, towns and cities. You contribute to the Church's mission first of all by showing consistency between your conduct and your faith. In word and deed you must proclaim Christ the light of the world.... Through lives which manifest deep integrity and by your persevering practice of fraternal charity in dealing with others, those whom you encounter in your work and with whom you associate on various levels of social life can be profoundly influenced.

You have the very special mission of speaking to the world in a practical way: to manifest truth and justice in your own lives: to proclaim by action your respect for life, your social concern, your rejection of materialism and consumerism....

"As lay people you are called to bear witness to Christ within the context of your homes, neighborhoods, towns and cities."

There is so much to be done. There are whole areas of human life which seem to be withdrawn from any ethical or religious influences.... The true disciple is eager to announce Christ by word either to unbelievers so as to draw them to the faith, or to the faithful in order to instruct them to more fervent Christian lives. There is truly an urgent need in the Church today for more lay people engaged in teaching Christian doctrine to the young.

The diversities of human needs require a diversity of response on the part of the Church. The Church is one but she counts on the diligence of her members to discover more effective ways to face new problems and new needs....

In a very real sense we can say that the apostolate is the unfolding of Jesus' love for others from within ourselves. However, without that union with Christ which is fostered through prayer, our energy flags, we lose fervor and we run the risk of becoming as "a sounding brass or tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1)....

We find a model of this apostolic life in the humble Virgin of Nazareth, the Mother of Jesus, Queen of the Apostles. As the Second Vatican Council says of her: "While on earth Mary's life was like that of any other, filled with labors and the cares of the home; always, however, she remained intimately united to her Son and cooperated in an entirely unique way in the Savior's work. And now, assumed into heaven, 'her motherly care keeps her attentive to her Son's brothers and sisters, still on pilgrimage amid the dangers and difficulties of life, until they arrive at the happiness of their homeland' " (Apostolicam Actuositatem, 4). □

Excerpts from L'Osservatore Romano *English Edition, October 1, 1984.*

Call any country our home

by Mary Cass and Mariele Quartana

It seems that in our society family security and stability are becoming always more identified with a house in the suburbs, a good retirement plan, an active and long-time contribution to community organizations and a nice vacation spot "away from it all".

One can readily imagine in this context what a visible sign of contradiction are families who enthusiastically decide to turn their backs on "settling ►

Telmo and Lila Correira with their two children Maria and Moises, on the day of their departure from Rome to Caracas, Venezuela.

down in that secure spot" to head out on a venturesome undertaking in some unknown continent.

What is it that prompted Antonella and Luca Luchini still in their early 30's, a promising and lucrative future ahead of them in the medical profession, to leave their native town of Pisa, Italy to settle in Nairobi Kenya? Or Telmo and Lila Correira, who left their country of Portugal, with their two young children for far off Venezuela?

Who are these couples—all at different stages in their family life—who feel that any country of the world can be called their home?

Their motivation for such a radical decision is one: the love of God, expressed in the love for every human person. Who are they? They are married focolarini, who, as the single focolarini of the Focolare Movement, have as their principal aim to achieve unity through mutual love practiced 24 hours a day. They are families which live with Christ present in their midst, with the fullest communion, both material and spiritual, between husband and wife.

In 1971, Chiara Lubich addressed a group of these couples in this way: "What really characterizes these families is unity, with an almost constant presence of Jesus in the midst. Therefore they give a real testimony to Christianity lived in the family. These are the families which are open to the plans of God, ready to go wherever he wants."

And their children? Already in the sixties, Chiara noticed that the children who grow up in such families acquired a Christian vision of the world and of life in general. "For this reason," she said "they will reason evangelically and will not see people as being pleasant or unpleasant, friends or foreigners, but will see only the immense family of the children of God. They will be 'new men and women'."

As the Focolare Movement has grown and spread throughout the world likewise the number of these families has grown.

Communities of people desirous of living the spirituality of unity of the Focolare Movement have sprung up in almost every country of the world. The need for Focolare Centers throughout the five continents has grown. It was seen that for these cities where a focolare center could not be opened, married focolarini could be sent to answer this need. In other areas of the world the witness of a Christian family was needed.

Bishops were requesting such families of the Movement for their dioceses. In environments with a culture and tradition very different from that of the Western world married people with children were able to integrate easily into the society surrounding them and establish a point of contact and dialogue with the people.

With the rapid spreading of the Movement, the number of families emigrating from the North to the South, from the East to the West has increased: young couples full of zeal and generosity and older ones with a wealth of experience and knowlege of life.

Telmo and Lila Correira expressed a certain spirit of freedom, an unusual joy when we greeted them on their day of departure from Rome. Surrounded by whatever of their possessions were transportable —and two excited and enthusiastic children—they were ready to board the next flight for Caracus, Venezuela.

Only a month after their arrival, we already received news of their first adventures in their new homeland.

"Here we are in Caracus," began their first letter. "You can't imagine the festivities that were awaiting us when we arrived. We truly found 100 mothers, 100 brothers and sisters, 100 homes. Just think: Maria and Moisos (7 and 5 years old) prefer our small apartment here to their home in Lisbon!

"It is filled with the love of the whole community here who made every effort to provide us with everything we needed. Each object speaks of their personal love; making this little place even more sacred.

"It is very small, but we don't feel that this limits us in any way, in fact it helps us to move around with greater respect and attention for one another. The apartments are very close to each other—our neighbors can see and hear everything. We can't allow ourselves to stop loving for a moment, this is very good for us."

Naturally the beginning of their integration into a society so different from their own was difficult. Finding nothing else, Telmo took a job as a doorman in a hotel. There were the long hours and the hot sun to contend with. A cross section of humanity passed before his eyes, people whose faces reflected the suffering and pain of the troubled world surrounding them. His salary was very low, insufficient for a family of four.

"We are certain," they wrote, "that God already has another

job in mind. But for now this work has been helpful in introducing us to the mentality and way of life of the people here...."

Maria and Moises had to take their own steps in this unknown venture: to be separated from one another in an unfamiliar school setting, a new language to learn, new friends to meet.

Moises, who had often been ill since infancy, entered Kindergarden and immediately began to develop new friendships. Maria was held back a year in school due to the language.

"We feel that this small suffering for Maria has been positive. It has helped her to mature. It seems that God is using these circumstances to teach us to love him more," they wrote. "Everything here is new for us. We feel this is wonderful.... We have everything to learn.... We feel like children who own nothing and for this very reason have the possibility of having everything.

"Every day we discover more and more how beautiful and sacred life is in this reality that God has given us to live. We feel a great sense of gratitude. Whatever the cost, we will remain faithful."

Four months later we learned that Telmo already had a new job in a clothing store, with a salary three times higher than before. Maria speaks fluent Spanish and frequently the apartment is filled with her neighborhood friends. Moises has not been sick since their arrival, this too seems a sign of God's blessing.

"We have become Latin Americans," Telmos and Lilo wrote to us in January. "We are happier every day. We have acquired a vaster and more universal vision."

Antonella and Luca Luchini, with their daughter Sara, recently moved to Nairobi, Kenya. "Our experience here," they wrote, "has helped us to grow and acquire new insights."

With the example of our lives

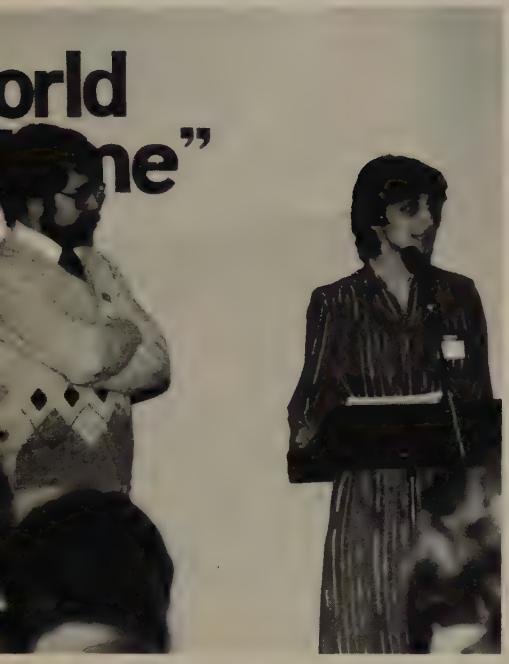
Antonella and Luca Lucchini:

(he is an anesthesiologist and she is a teacher), have made their new home in Nairobi, Kenya, with their three-year-old daughter Sara. Luca works in the Hospital of Nazareth, close to their apartment.

"Our home is perfect," they wrote, "both the rich and poor are comfortable here. The language is still a big problem for us; we want to be able to communicate with these new 'brothers and sisters' of ours as soon as possible. For this reason we started to study English right away.

"Recently we went to N'Jabini, a village about two hours from Nairobi, where we met with a group of twenty people, some of whom we had already met in Rome. They were so happy to see us and invited us to return as soon as possible. Last Sunday we attended the baptism of Mike and Kathrin's fourth son. They are an African couple living just outside the city. We became friends immediately. Sara played with their children and the children of the neighborhood as one of them. There are many problems here regarding family life....

"We feel we must act with great respect. We cannot expect to find solutions ourselves; but we can hope to help many just by the example of our own lives. We are always more convinced that our coming here has helped both of us to progress and grow spiritually." ►



Carlos and Gail Freire at a recent meeting in Vancouver.

Gail and Carlos Freire from Toronto, Canada, experienced the same personal love of God (also expressed in a community which thought of their every need), with their immediate yes to move, with their three children to Vancouver.

With the continuous development of the Movement on the West Coast of Canada, it became always more evident that a Focolare Center should be open to answer the needs of the fast growing community of the Movement there. The solution? A Focolare Family.

The Freire's shared with us that they had always felt that their initial yes to God said several years ago when they entered the Focolare as married Focolarini was truly total.

"Total meant for us to begin to live immediately (at that time it was only spiritually) that sentence of Scripture, 'Whoever does not leave father, mother, fields... for my sake...'," Gail shared with us, "so our first reaction to the proposed plan of moving our family to Vancouver was our very spontaneous consent—our decision 'to leave everything for his sake...' had been made long before. Regarding all the practical implications of this move, we were certain that in doing the will of God everything would fall into its proper place."

Families into the World:
The children... what do they think?

How do the children react? "When we decided to break the news to them," replied Anna Giublesi of Turin, "we first discussed what to say and how to say it; but we hadn't discussed who would do the talking. I expected my husband to do it, and he thought I should.

When we sat down together around the table there was great silence. Our children are grown up but they still live with us. We have often been talking about all the families who were leaving even though we never considered the possibility of doing it ourselves because we were about to retire.

" 'Well?' one of our children finally burst out. 'What on earth is the matter?' So we had to manage somehow, taking turns and helping one another out, to tell them what we were thinking.

"It was a very profound moment for all of us. After a first moment of perplexity, they revealed a deep respect for our decision, almost a sense of awe, a fear of putting obstacles in the path of God's plan.

"It can happen, however, that the children are at an age when being moved to another social reality is not the best thing for them, as if you were transplanting a tree in the wrong season. Pulling up their roots, just when they were beginning to be aware of their surroundings and adjusting to them, can provoke a crisis.

"There are also other people involved as well, not just the parents and the children. There are grandparents, sometimes widowed, and other relatives as well."

"What matters," said the Raimondi's of Milan, "is not so much the question of going or staying, but the fact of giving the family a new dimension, breathing space. We have already tried to widen the walls of our home in order to get our children interested in society at large. If we do that, we feel that one day they will be more sensitive to what is happening in other nations. We do all we can in order not to close ourselves off from the outside world."

"This is particularly true today," Giorgio from Naples confirmed. "So many people are on the move for business purposes. When it's a matter of self interest it seems that we're ready to do anything. Why shouldn't we be ready to do it for God?

Today I overheard our youngest daughter as she was explaining the whole story of our move to her classmates. Her conclusion was

Elizabetta, Cristina and Luca Marini are ready to move with their parents from their native Italy to Bogota, Colombia. They took part fully, each in their own measure, in the decision to go.

that after all, whether we lived here or in Athens, it was all the same. The only difference was the language!"

"When we came home from the meeting at which we had made our final decision to leave," Sandra and Dino Piccoli of Turin recalled, "we found an arrangement of beautiful flowers on the table. Our two daughters had put it there as a way of telling us that they were happy about our decision and that they, too, were saying yes to God's plan."

"This experience of detachment made us discover new dimensions in our family—a very strong unity and the richness of the sacrament."

Perhaps the great mystery of marriage lies right there. The vocation of these married couples, inspired by a family hidden in Nazareth, where God was putting the roots of heaven in the midst of humanity.

Nedo Pozzi

"And that's exactly what happened... in an incredible way," Carlos added. I am a teacher and I had been teaching for nine years in the Toronto School system. I already had my plans for what I would do with my sizable pension plan when I reached the retirement age of fifty-five. I knew that 'yes' meant to leave also my profession if necessary. Instead, shortly after we began packing our bags, I received a call from someone of the community of Vancouver telling me that a job interview had already been set up for me. It was one of the most reputable high schools of the city. In spite of the sixty-nine other applicants for the job, they hired me immediately. It seemed to us to be a visible sign of God's providence that arrived many times over during the six weeks of our preparation for the move."

"We wanted to involve our children right away in this new adventure," Gail told us. "We told them everything that was happening and asked them what they thought. Christina, who was then seven, had the strongest reaction because she was thinking of what it meant to be so far from her grandparents, her schoolmates and her Gen[1] friends. Almost as an answer to her problem, she came to us the next day to say, 'I'm happy to go to Vancouver. so that there will be many more Gen 4'!" ►

Cristina Freire, now nine years old, with her her brothers John (seated) age 6, and Paul, age 3.

"The next step," Carlos continued, "was to request the Toronto School Board to release me from my contract. If they did not agree to do so, I would have to remain through the next term, which would mean loosing the position in Vancouver. The Board accepted my resignation just two weeks before our proposed move."

"So we had the job," Gail went on, "now was the moment to tell our families of our departure. We both come from small families and we knew that the separation from their grandchildren would be difficult. Also in this we felt God's immense love—our parents gave us their full approval.

"At this point we put our house on the market, against all odds in getting the asked price and the closing date we needed. Then we started packing—not for Vancouver, but for the summer Mariapolis[2] in New York. While there, we received three offers and within two days of our return, the house was sold for the price we had anticipated and a closing date for the same day of our flight to the West Coast.

"You should have seen our arrival in Vancouver!" Carlos broke in enthusiastically. "We only had our suitcases (we had sold all our furniture) and there we found a spacious and completely furnished town house awaiting us. The paintings on the wall and fresh flowers and plants reflected the love of the whole community here. It was touching to see our son John, who had to leave his favorite hockey game behind, receive a better one from one of the families who visited us the next day.

Three months after our arrival we moved into our new home.

Hermine and Gottfried Schmoelz, a young Austrian couple, have left for the Cameroons, Africa. Gottfried is teaching Agriculture in a high school there. Hermine stays at home with their two young children and this has given her the opportunity to form friendships with the women of the village.

It, too, seemed to have been prepared specifically for us—from the wallpaper to the furniture. With every event and detail we felt God's recompense a hundred times over in goods, but also in newfound joy and freedom for our small yes to him."

The numbers of these unique families which are literally "on the move" has steadily increased over these past years. I would almost say this family "migration" has become for them a style of life, a custom. Their generosity and love for all of God's children, a reflection of the spirituality of unity that they try to put into practice, have caused them to view the world as one family. It is a vision which they have made into a living example, noteworthy for many, often distracted by the self concerns and consumerism of the surrounding society.

In the words of one such couple settled in a distant continent, "Every day we experience the fulfillment of those words of Scripture: 'We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love him' (Rom. 8:28). It is becoming always more of a reality for us that no country is too far or too alien to become our home." □

1. 2) See inside back cover.

At the Phanar:

Solemn Divine Liturgy in the Patriarchal Church of Saint George at the Phanar: from the right, Roman Catholic Bishop Thienchai of Chanthaburi (Thailand); Bishop Hemmerle of Aachen (Germany); Chiara Lubich; the Anglican bishops from England: Bishop Dennis, Bishop Goodchild and Bishop Wood.

The Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrius I is shown at left approaching the iconostasis

Orthodox, Anglican and Catholic Bishops in Istanbul

by Gabriella Fallacara

An ecumenical encounter on the theme of Jesus Crucified and Forsaken, a key point in the spirituality of the Focolare Movement.

An informal meeting of bishops of various Christian traditions took place in Istanbul from October 7 to 11 last year. The three Anglican bishops and also the fourteen Roman Catholic bishops were landing on the banks of the Bosporous for the first time, while the three Metropolites, and the Orthodox bishop of the Ecumenical Patriarcate of Constantinople found themselves in very familiar surroundings for them. Those who had met the Focolare Movement as far back as 1967, during the first contacts with the late Patriarch Athenagoras I at the Phanar, were especially joyous in looking forward to this ecumenical event. It was in fact at the tomb of Athenagoras I that they experienced a particularly profound moment, as the bishops of various continents gathered in prayer. They had also come to Istanbul to come to know and appreciate more deeply the treasures of the common heritage of Christianity as they had been conserved in the Orthodox Church. Now, being together like this, they seemed to represent one of the fruits of Athenagoras' great love and deep suffering for the cause of unity.

In accordance with the wishes of Patriarch Demetrius I, the encounter of study and reflection concluded with an audience at the Phanar. (The meeting itself had taken place in the Catholic Church and convent of Saint Anthony, courtesy of the Franciscan fathers.)

The central theme was Jesus Crucified and Forsaken in the theology of Western and Eastern Churches, and the spiritual life, as a basis for dialogue and as a concrete means to achieve the unity Jesus had asked of the Father.

On the morning of October 8, the bishops spoke with great ►

A symbol of unity:

Istanbul: The modern bridge over the Bosporus, linking East and West, is a symbol of unity.

simplicity about their life, their knowledge of the Movement, and their association with it. Chiara Lubich presented the introductory theme: "The Spirituality of the Focolare Movement" which was then commented on by the bishops and metropolites who were present.

Metropolite Chrysostomos, in his remarks, emphasized the concepts that had touched him intellectually and spiritually especially as an Orthodox theologian, in particular the central role given to Mary. "The definition of Mary as 'the perfect Christian' was a great joy for me to hear," he said. "In the Orthodox tradition Mary indeed has a central role." He also said that this concept has an ecumenical future because the central role of Mary goes back to the early Church, which is the foundation of all the Churches.

Another point which the eminent theologian underlined was the importance of unity. Basing his comments on the letters of Saint John, as well as the Gospels, he concluded, "Only if we have love, can we have unity."

Precious service:

October 11, 1984. The Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrius I warmly greeted Chiara Lubich, founder and president of the Focolare Movement. The Patriarch addressed the participating bishops and said, among other things, "We are well aware of and follow with affection the goals, the work, and the spirituality of this Movement which offers such precious service, not only to our sister Church of Rome—in whose heart it was created and continues to work and grow—but also to the entire Christian world, above all for the unity in Christ of the separated Churches in Christ and for the spiritual well-being of all humanity."

"A new witness to the world today":

The Metropolite of Myra, Chrysostomos Konstantinidis, translates, from Greek, the greetings of the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios I to the group of bishops, with Chiara Lubich present. The Patriarch said, among other things, "We wish to express to you that for us, the topic of your convention, 'Jesus Crucified and Forsaken,' gives a new witness to the world today through the Focolare Movement."

At the tomb of Athenagoras:

A moment of prayer at the tomb of the great Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I who died in Istanbul in 1972. Front row, from the right: two Roman Catholic bishops, Bishop Didonet of Rio Grande (Brazil); Bishop Schruers of Sasselt (Belgium); Chiara Lubich; the Greek Orthodox Bishop Gennadios of Kratea; and Anglican Bishop Dennis of Knaresborough (England). Second row: Father Bettoli; the Roman Catholic Bishops, Bishop Henderson of Southwark (London) and Bishop Thienchai of Cathaburi (Thailand); the Anglican Bishop Wood of Hereford (England); and the Greek Orthodox guide, Prof. Raycanovski. (The laws of the country require that clergy wear civilian clothing when outside the church precincts.)

On the second day, the participants made a trip to the Heybeli Island to visit the famous monastery of the Most Holy Trinity which houses the Orthodox Seminary of Chalke.

Before dinner, offered by the Metropolite Maximos Rapanellis, the participants listened to some of the most important talks of the convention. In her talk entitled: "Jesus Forsaken, key to unity with our neighbor," Chiara, as the fruit of 40 years experience of life, proposed Jesus Crucified and Forsaken as the model to follow in loving our neighbor. "His death on the cross, in his abandonment is the highest, the divine and heroic lesson Jesus has given us about the nature of love. This image of Jesus Crucified and Forsaken has been carved into our hearts, so that we may know what love is."

The words of Metropolite Chrysostomos on "Jesus Crucified and Forsaken in the Orthodox tradition" were extremely interesting for their theological, spiritual, and pastoral depth. His talk was interspersed with quotations ►

from the Church Fathers. The Orthodox Metropolite pointed out three dimensions contained in the words of the forsaken Jesus on the cross: the human dimension, because of their reference to all aspects of any human reaction to a death so full of anguish as death on the cross; the divine dimension, because he who suffered on the cross was the son of God, that is God himself; and the human-divine dimension which is the more theological one.

The Metropolite concluded with these words, "I think that the best, most correct, most valid and complete answer we can give to the words, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me ' is that of loving and keeping unity. To love one another is the only rule of life that is valid for all centuries; unity among all people, among Christians as the main purpose of human life, of life in Christ. This is what Jesus Crucified and Forsaken expects of us."

During the following days, the bishops attended the celebration of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church of Saint Anthony and in the Anglican Church of Saint Helen. All the bishops also attended the Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral Church of Saint George in the Phanar. Gathered in prayer after the celebration they asked, through the intercession of Mary "Theotokos" (Mother of God) for the grace to live with always greater intensity, Jesus' commandment in order to achieve unity, so that the world may believe.

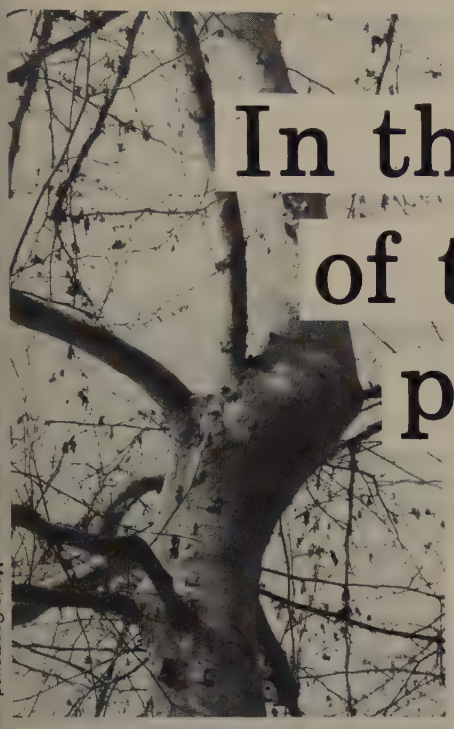
As he received the ecumenical group in an audience, Patriarch Demetrius I expressed his pleasure for the goals achieved, as well as his esteem and confidence. He said, among other things, "We are well aware of and follow with affection the goals, the work and the spirituality of this Movement which offers such precious service not only to our sister Church of Rome—in whose heart it was created and continues to work and grow—but also to the entire Christian world, above all for the unity in Christ of the separated Churches and for the spiritual well-being of all humanity."

The Patriarch went on to say, "You have now spent a few days in this historic city, seat of the Bishop of Constantinople and you know that, in its long life, it has also been crucified and forsaken. These words certainly mean a great deal to you. This eparchy has always followed the example of its Lord, always preaching hope, light, resurrection and life. It has always been on the forefront of every opening and every effort directed towards achieving the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer, 'That all may be one'."

These words expressed the thoughts and conclusions of all the participants: that of having re-discovered together the mystery of the Cross, and finding in the Cross the way that leads to the fullness of unity. This informal meeting of bishops of various traditions seemed a prophetic moment, one of those moments in which we experience a glimpse of the unity that Jesus prayed for, that unity which is a gift of the Holy Spirit, the one who gives the guarantee of an eternal Pentecost in the Church of Christ. □

A particularly beautiful day:

"The day we visited the island of Chalki, near Istanbul, was a particularly beautiful one," wrote the Catholic Bishop Didonet of Brazil. "There we listened to two talks on Jesus Forsaken, one prepared by the Orthodox Metropolite Chrysostomos of Myra and the other by Chiara Lubich. Since no automobiles are allowed on the island we used horse drawn carriages to take us to the ancient church and seminary."



Maria Caampued

In the light of the present moment

"Small things," Rosa Pagan had written, "no matter how small they may be, can have a powerful impact, so long as they are imprinted with love, or with suffering transformed into love." This was Rosa's experience, an awareness that came more and more into relief as the threat of cancer became a reality and her active life underwent a transformation. We present the third chapter of her biography.

"...And life became silence..."

The future looked bright for Rosa and her family, but in the spring of 1968 she began to feel unusually tired. "You're just working too hard!" her friends told her; however their reassurances failed to put Rosa at ease. After going to the doctor for a general physical and being told that she was in very good shape, she finally put the fatigue out of her mind, and even signed up to take a few graduate courses in Spanish and Portuguese during the summer.

Rosa and Eddie went to the Mariapolis again in August of that year.

"They were marvelous days," she wrote. "To understand what a Mariapolis is, you really have to go. People meeting together and trying to practice the mutual love of Jesus: Americans, Italians, Spanish, French, Puerto Ricans, Canadians all with one goal: to live in community. 'That all may be one!' "

All summer Rosa had not felt well, but by the time she returned from the Mariapolis she was experiencing severe pain. She was admitted to the hospital, and after days of tests her doctor informed her that sooner or later she would need a major operation. The news came as a great shock. "What will happen to my children? What about my job?" Rosa agonized. She finally decided to put off the operation and return home.

Classes started in September and Rosa resumed a full teaching schedule. She taught only for seven days, however, because by then the pain was so acute that she couldn't continue. She returned to the hospital and underwent surgery immediately.

"You can't describe the sufferings of those days with words," Rosa was to say much later. "I put my sons in the hands of Jesus and accepted, or better, embraced my cross. I didn't know then how heavy it would be."

Two weeks after the operation, when Rosa was preparing to go back home, the doctors informed her that the results of some biopsies they had just performed were not good, and that she would have to undergo radiation therapy for about five weeks. "They didn't tell me the whole truth," Rosa later explained, "but by then I suspected that there was something seriously wrong with me."

Days of terror

"I'll never forget the day of the first application," she continued. "I was frightened to death of that big machine. Only praying and praying and talking to Jesus gave me the strength to withstand those five minutes.

"The second day was the same. I said to Jesus: 'I beg you, stay here with me.' I repeated it to him one, two, a hundred times. I was frightened, exhausted and suffering: a spiritual suffering more than a physical one. I felt alone; it seemed that not even Jesus was with me any longer. It was a tremendous agony, almost unbearable. I had to call the nurse.

"The following days were also days of terror; I don't know why. It is hard to understand how, at times you put yourself in the hands of God, you embrace the cross, and really you want to suffer for him, however... There are things you can't avoid. We are human beings, conditioned by many elements. At times I was more ►

trusting, but most of the time it was real agony. But I resisted."

After only two or three weeks of therapy Rosa once again became acutely ill. The doctors told her that she had an intestinal obstruction; for the third time in two months she returned to the hospital.

"It was a period of great spiritual growth," Rosa wrote. "The doctors, my family, no one ever mentioned that word that was feared by all: cancer! But I knew...

"The night that I reentered the hospital, through the emergency room, my doctor wasn't there. He was out of town and it was impossible to reach him. They gave me a blood transfusion and I had a bad reaction. That night there was only a young intern, a foreigner. I kewn him because he usually accompanied my doctor on his daily visits. He didn't have a good reputation and had much difficulty speaking English.

"I had a temperature of 104°. When you are really ill you think of the worst, even of death. When I saw him I was profoundly disillusioned. I looked at him, and then closed my eyes immediately, thinking: 'Look who they sent me!' I opened my eyes again and he was still there, looking at me, smiling without saying a word.

"I closed my eyes again and continued to repeat to myself: 'What will he do to me now?' I didn't consider him capable of helping me. I opened my eyes for the third time and again he smiled at me kindly. Silently I prayed: 'Forgive me, my God for this reaction. Only you can help me. Let it be the way you want.' I looked again at the doctor and this time I saw Jesus in him: Jesus that smiled, that tried to help me and wished me well. It was a splendid moment. Now I was sure that, in that doctor, as in anyone else, Jesus was there in front of me. I wanted to help him to make a decision. I smiled at him and spoke to him. He gave instructions to the nurse and left me. Shortly after, the prescribed medicine took effect and in a few hours the fever went down."

By the middle of November, Rosa was well enough to return home, but life was not the same anymore. She wrote:

LIFE BECAME SILENCE

Chris Adams

Cancer...and life became silence.
My voice no longer echoes
in the classroom,
nor my laughter among
colleagues and students.
Other hands take care of
my house, my sons.
Other hands give them
their daily bread.
Every silence, every suffering,
every heart overflowing with
goodness,
every material and spiritual
assistance,
everything is summed up in him,
fountain of grace, infinite
goodness.
This silent fountain has over-
turned the transparent and
sweet waters of my life.
The silent sun of the resurrec-
tion
has spoken to the silence of
my nothingness.
And, silenced, I was able to
hear his voice,
the glorious voice of the Risen
Lord,
voice which is the confirmation
of his will."

This was a time of great suffering, both physical and spiritual for Rosa but as her own words attest she never despaired.

"Life is not all poetry and dreams," she wrote. "The day has arrived in which suffering, which has often wounded my soul, has also wounded my flesh. I don't know what my future will be, but I am sure that, whatever it is, I have won a great spiritual victory. If I would have to give a title to my life, it would be: 'Cancer, my victory.' "

In January of 1969 Rosa resumed her teaching position at Princeton High School. She was feeling somewhat better by this time but, as she noted in her diary, she occasionally looked back on the days she was severely ill with a kind of nostalgia.

"In those days, whether in the hospital or at home, I felt strongly the presence of Jesus, Man—God—Love. I was really ill: suffering physically and in anguish. It was as if I were at the threshhold of eternity. The world did not exist for me anymore. It was because of this that I felt Jesus so close to me. Now that I am better, I almost feel a nostalgia for those days. It seems that I have lost a lot —everything—and it appears to me that I no longer have anything to offer God."

It was not long, though, before God asked something more of her. March of that year found her once again in the hospital.

"I was sharing a room with a woman who had had a heart attack," she told some of her friends in the Focolare Movement somewhat later. "Her speech and her movements were visibly affected by it. As evening approached I realized that I would not be able to sleep very much because she was loudly expressing her obvious discomfort and pain. I felt all of this getting on my nerves, and decided to leave the room in order to avoid the unpleasant situation.

"I went as far away from the room as I could go, and sat in the lobby, hoping that someone would come along and feel sorry for me. Time was passing, and every once in a while someone went by. They didn't seem to notice that anything was wrong, however; they just smiled and continued their way. All of a sudden I became aware of what I was doing. Something very strong inside of me was reminding me of loving. I went back to my bed. The situation was the same but I realized I could now view it with new eyes.

"As time went by, the lady became calmer and I was able to sleep at least a little. The following morning I woke up and felt a deep joy within me. I could see my roommate in the mirror as I was getting ready, and I no longer felt that it was hard to love her. I went over and held her hand and started to talk to her. In spite of the difficult state she was in we were able to communicate, and I had the impression that she felt my love.

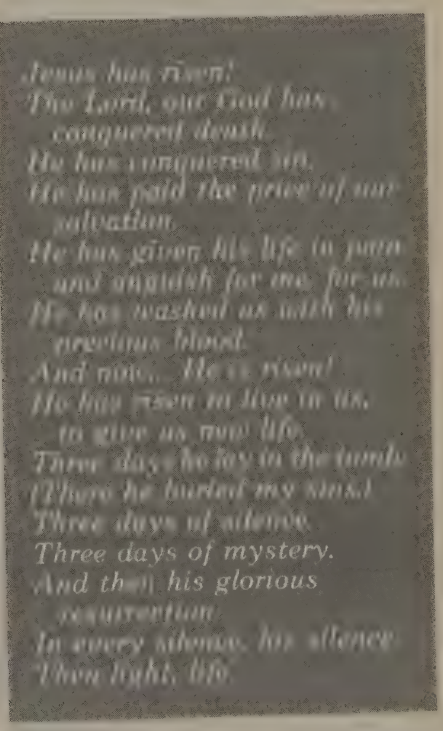
"Later on, the nurse arrived with the news that I would be changing rooms because they had realized that it must have been hard for me to sleep there. I quickly said that my present room was fine for me. On the two nights that followed I slept very well, and even my roommate seemed to be doing better."

Rosa's hospital stay was brief; and no sooner did she get back home than she returned to school, anxious to be able to support the family again. But within a few weeks it became obvious to her that she would have to leave her job again. This realization made her suffer deeply.

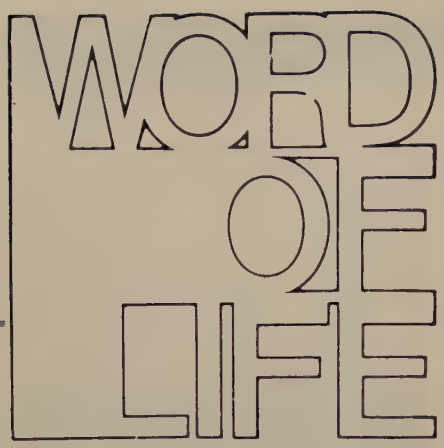
"I love my job," she wrote. "I need to work for my three sons. I want to be healthy. But the Lord has different plans and he knows what he is doing..."

Easter

By April 6th, Rosa's condition had worsened to the extent that she was forced to reenter the hospital. It was Easter Sunday, and for the first time since February she was able to attend a Mass, this one taking place in the small hospital chapel. Afterwards she wrote:


Jesus has risen!
The Lord, our God has
conquered death.
He has conquered sin.
He has paid the price of our
salvation.
He has given his life in pain
and anguish for me, for us.
He has washed us with his
precious blood.
And now... He is risen!
He has risen to live in us,
to give us new life.
Three days he lay in the tomb
(There he buried my sins.)
Three days of silence.
Three days of mystery.
And then his glorious
resurrection.
In every silence, his silence
Then light, life.

To be continued.



With God
on our side
who can be against us?
(Rom. 8:31)

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

With these words Paul concluded the first chapters of his letter to the Romans in which he described God's plan to save all human beings, and the fulfillment of that plan in Jesus who died and rose for us.

God engaged his total self for us, and the love and initiative that he took for humanity seemed so evident and so very splendid to Paul that he could not help but burst out with this exclamation of admiration and gratitude.

The Apostle uses the image of a court in session, that courtroom in which each of us will one day be judged. In this case, however, the judge—no less than God himself—becomes our lawyer and defender. Paul, therefore, asks, if God is on our side, who would dare to be our accuser? Obviously no one.

Even the accusations that might arise from our own conscience, with the memory of past sins, or from other people, or from our great adversary Satan, would fall away.

With God on our side who can be against us?

The passage of scripture that opens with this sentence has been called the hymn of Christian hope—that virtue that gives us the strength to be faithful to God's call in spite of all the difficulties we might meet along the way. We know that Christian life consists in accepting the word of God and in trying to put it into practice; but we are trying to live this kind of a life in a world, and in certain situations, where interior and exterior factors of every kind enter into play. They could frighten us and block us spiritually. It is enough to experience our own weakness in the face of very strong and persistent temptations, or the difficulties that arise because of our surroundings, or that result from our financial situation, or our health, and so on. Hope helps us to overcome all these obstacles for it is based on the fact that God loves us. Hope is, therefore, courage; it is optimism; it is confidence, that confidence, naturally, that comes from God; it is determination; it is joy.

With God on our side who can be against us?

If we really want to know exactly what hope is, we have to look at Jesus. During his life on earth he encountered many difficulties: people's disbelief, mockery, fierce opposition from his adversaries, the denial by his own followers, then, death, and the feeling of having totally failed in his mission. He knew what was awaiting him, and yet he went out to meet all these trials intent only upon fulfilling his Father's plan, with the certainty that the Father would raise him up.

Immediately after the resurrection he appeared to his disciples, who were dispersed and frightened, in order to reunite them, to comfort them, to reassure them that he was alive and that he would be with them always. Jesus forgot their

shortcomings and revived their hope. He made of these fearful men—who had slipped back into the past—men of hope who became capable of looking to the future, of building the kingdom of God, of trusting only in him, in the strength of his resurrection.

With God on our side who can be against us?

How can we live this word of life? —by also being people of hope. This means not allowing ourselves to remain in the past but rather living outside of ourselves, giving everything to the only one who is truly able to fill every emptiness, believing that God will bring to fulfillment the work of our sanctification, believing that it is possible to live the Gospel, that good is stronger than evil, and that not one act of real love will go without bearing fruit. It means being convinced that the future, prepared by God, will be more beautiful than today; it means knowing how to give our limited projects second place and to work at the immense ones which God's love holds for us.

Certain excuses that someone might give, such as "I don't feel like it," or "I can't make it," or "It's no use..." or "God has forgotten me," and so on, no longer hold up. God is on our side. Jesus died and rose in order to give us hope, and to make of us people who can communicate hope.

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences in living the Gospel which some of our readers have shared with us.

BACK ON THE RIGHT TRACK

I came home from school one day and felt like cooking something. I looked in the cookbook and found a candy recipe I had wanted to try for a while, so I set myself up in the kitchen. I knew, however, that my parents were having a big group for dinner that night and that my mother certainly did not need me in her way in the kitchen. I felt uneasy that maybe I hadn't chosen the most opportune moment for my cooking spree, but I decided to go ahead just the same. It was enough to see the expression on my mother's face when she walked into the kitchen to know that I was not doing the right thing.

Now, certain that I was in the wrong spot, I tried to hurry up, finish off the candy-making and exit from the kitchen as soon as I could. My mother in the meantime began to let me know in no uncertain terms that my presence was creating more confusion than anything else. I started to get angry. I turned around and yelled, "All right! I heard you!"

By this time I was thoroughly frustrated with myself and with the whole situation. I was just about to storm out of the kitchen when it occurred to me that maybe it would be better if I decided to start loving again and restored peace with my mother.

That month we were trying to live the phrase: "So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come and present your offering."

"If your brother has something against you..." With a renewed desire to love my mother I told her I was sorry, asking her what I could do to help. I started setting up the tables and helping with the food. That atmosphere of mutual love that moments before had been broken was restored.

When the company came later that evening they saw a big lump of unidentifiable food stuck to the candy dish and asked what it was. I had secretly named it "Reminder Candy" because just to glance at it made me grateful to God for having put me back on the right track.

A.U.

UN Photo

God needs no chalices of gold
but rather, golden souls.

Saint John Chrysostom

Need for a global ommitment

Last year, the World Population Conference took place in Mexico City. We asked Monsignor James McHugh, Adviser to the Holy See Mission to the United Nations on Population Matters to give us some first hand information, as he was part of the Delegation of the Holy See to the Conference.

Detail of the poster made for the International Conference on Population held in Mexico City in 1984. (United Nations).

Msgr. McHugh, could you give us some background information?

A decade after the 1974 World Population Conference in Bucharest, the United Nations sponsored an International Conference on Population in Mexico City in August, 1984 to review progress and difficulties related to population. Representatives of the member states, permanent observers, specialized agencies and organizations of the UN and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations convened to review and assess the *World Population Plan of Action* (WPPA) that was formulated in Bucharest.

We know that as preparation for the Mexico City Conference, four specialized groups met and produced reports. What were they?

On fertility and the family, mortality, environment and resources and migration. The UN Regional Commissions examined these reports and a special Preparatory Committee met in January and March, 1984, and produced a new document called *Recommendations for the Further Implementation of the World Population Plan of Action.* This document was the major item for discussion in Mexico City. The document was based on the assumption that the basic principles of the WPPA remained valid, but that events during the past decade might call for setting some new priorities.

What changes have occurred in the global situation during the past ten years?

While world population has increased, the *rate* of population growth has been decreasing. Mortality has decreased, especially among infants, and life expectancy has increased. Fertility rates have decreased in both developed and developing nations.

What were the aims of the Mexico City Conference?

In view of the actual changes in the population situation, and taking into account the attention given to population policy by many governments, the conference aimed at strengthening and sustaining the momentum already generated in population activities; identifying emerging problems for concerted action; and initiating programs in areas where no significant impact has yet been achieved.

The Holy See participated in the 1974 World Conference, and ►

has systematically followed population discussions in the intervening years. What has been its position?

The Holy See did not join the consensus in adopting the World Population Plan of Action in 1974 because the final document failed to support the family as the basic social unit and the unique place for child bearing and child rearing. It was weak on an overall respect for life and it gave an overbearing and somewhat indiscrimate emphasis to family planning as the primary, if not only, response to population problems. It should be noted that the WPPA did recognize socio-economic transformation as the basis for solving population problems. However, the WPPA also changed a basic working principle of the United Nations which had recognized the right of married couples to decide freely and responsibly on the size of their families.

What happened at Bucharest?

The Bucharest revision of this principle accorded this right to decide, and to have the information and means to carry out the decision to *individuals* as well as to couples. In effect, in according the right to individuals, the Bucharest Conference and the WPPA diminished the status of the family as the unique community for conjugal love and responsible parenthood, and endorsed a viewpoint which accepts sexual activity and parenthood as prerogatives of unmarried individuals.

Nonetheless, the Holy See did send a delegation to Mexico City this past August.

Yes, a delegation did go, an international one at that. It was headed by Bishop Jan Schotte of Belgium, of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace. The other members were Msgr. Antonio Mattiazzo from Italy, of the Secretariat of State; Father Diarmuid Martin from Ireland, of the Pontifical Council for the Family; Mr. Guzman Carriquiry from Uruguay, of the Pontifical Council for the Laity; Dr. Marie Mascarenhas from India, of the Pontifical Council for the Family; Dr. Andrew Kiura from Kenya, of the Pontifical Council for the Family, and myself.

Population discussion deals with many issues affecting the lives and destinies of individuals, not simply with statistics and demographic projections. What was the point of view of the Holy See?

It recognizes all of this of course. The 1984 Conference was concerned with such issues as improving the outcome of pregnancy; health and nutrition of families especially mothers and children; care and concern for the aging; employment and social security; migration patterns and the rights and well-being of migrants and their families. The Holy See considers these humanitarian issues, that is, issues dealing with the nature of the human person as one created by God, redeemed by Christ, and capable of extending Christ's salvific mission through his or her associations with others in relationships of truth, justice and charity.

Courtesy United Nations

What was the delegation of the Holy See faced with?

It saw itself faced with three responsibilities, or you could call them opportunities: the opportunity to explain the Church's teaching on the many issues before the Conference; the opportunity to address many of these issues in terms of the dignity of the person and the common good and thereby build a consensus on the basis of values understood and shared by those of other religious backgrounds; the responsibility to speak against whatever violates the dignity and rights of the person or the common good, and thus create a restraining influence in the discussions and debates.

Who expressed the primary issues of the Holy See, and where?

Bishop Schotte, recognizing the complexity of population related issues, during the Plenary Assembly said that these issues, if they are to be satisfactorily resolves for the good of humanity, must be looked at from an ethical perspective. Thus, the Holy See wishes to call attention to some of the basic values related to population issues—the sacredness of human life and its transmission, the dignity

and importance of each person, the inviolability of all human rights, the value of marriage as the natural institution to which the transmission of life is exclusively entrusted, and the need for a global commitment to social justice and socio-economic development.

He expanded his comments on these issues and called special attention to the *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, which serves as a foundation for the Church's position on many of the issues before the Conference.

Was it difficult to put across the position of the Church?

While the heads of the various delegations explained their country's policies and programs in the Plenary Committee, the Main Committee met and considered amendments to the Recommendations. The delegation submitted a number of amendments directed toward emphasizing the value and importance of the family, the need to assist families of migrant workers, the role of mothers as primary agents in the health care of infants and young children, the importance of government support for natural family planning, and perhaps most significantly, the amendment that abortion is to be discouraged and should not be promoted as a method of family planning.

This amendment occasioned considerable debate, but had the support of many developing nations, notably countries of Latin America, and many developed nations including the United States and much of Western Europe. It was strongly opposed to by China and Sweden, as well as by some African and Asian nations. Some Eastern European nations opposed it, but did not argue strongly against its adoption. The importance of the amendment is that it reflected a generally negative attitude toward abortion and it made it clear that the majority did not consider abortion as an acceptable means of limiting births. Accordingly, the consensus arrived at was supportive of the policy of the United States and of other nations that are unwilling to provide funds for family planning programs that attempt to include abortion as a method of birth control.

Despite its success at seeing many of its amendments adopted, the Holy See delegation also realized that the final version of the Recommendations maintained a strong emphasis on expanding programs of contraception for unmarried individuals as well as married couples, and extended this to adolescents as well. Moreover, many of the proposals on the status of women were based on limiting fertility, and not necessarily on enabling women to assume their God-given rights and responsibilities.

We know that the Holy See did not participate in the consensus. How was its decision explained on that occasion?

While recognizing that many good things had been accomplished and that the understanding of many population variables had been enriched by the discussions and debates, the Holy See did not participate in the consensus on the Recommendations or the Declaration of

Courtesy United Nations

Mexico City, a second document approved by the member states. In explaining the Holy See's decision, Bishop Schotte made it clear that the Holy See could not accept or endorse proposals that are contrary to its belief and teaching. To do so would create confusion and undermine the Church's role as moral teacher.

What was the final outcome?

Many member states expressed their approval of and satisfaction with the role of the Holy See and their agreement with many of the positions and interventions of the Holy See Delegation. Mr. Rafael Salas, Secretary-General of the Conference, in his closing address pointed to the achievements of the meeting, among them a clearer recognition of the needs and roles of aging persons, the importance of the family unit and the clear statement against promoting abortion as a method of family planning.

While the Holy See's delegation did not prevail on its proposals, and did not change the basic tendency toward expanding family planning programs, it did demonstrate the value of raising ethical questions and the need for protecting human rights and family values in the consideration of population policies. □

In my history class we were checking our tests. As we were checking them I saw that the teacher did not mark one wrong. I didn't want to tell her because I knew she would mark it wrong and put my mark a grade lower. But I thought about what Jesus said to be honest. So I told her anyway. I received the hundredfold because I still passed!

Neireda
13 years old

On school awards night everyone was bragging about the awards they got. When it was over, it ended up that I got the two best awards (the Scholarship Award and the Citizenship award). I felt like bragging to everyone but I stayed quiet in order to love.

At the swimming awards banquet my brother John got the "Most Outstanding Swimmer" plaque. At first I was kind of envious, but in order to love Jesus in him, I went over to him and told him that he had done a good job and that he really deserved it.

Lucy
12 years old

I have two friends and one is jealous of the other friend because she thinks she likes me better than her. So she sent me a hate letter.

First I felt hurt and I wanted to send her a note back. But then I decided to go and ask her face to face about why she was so angry. She told me I was stealing away her friend. So I decided that as an act of love I could play with both my friends equally. My friend saw what I was doing and realized that I wasn't trying to steal away her friend. Now all three of us are friends again.

Kristy
12 years old

The young and the Gospel

One morning in school we were in gym. All of the kids in my class wanted to do all different kinds of things so we had a vote on what to do. All of my class wanted to play kickball and I wanted to play softball. When we were playing kickball, I didn't play that well because I wanted to play something else. During the game I thought to myself, "If we were playing softball, maybe the others wouldn't want to play, and they would feel the same way I do." So I started to play well and tried to love my classmates.

Afterwards I got the hundredfold because we played softball after we played kickball.

Chiarina
12 years old

There is a new teacher in our school. Nobody has any respect for him. The kids began to eat in the classroom or else they would do other homework instead of listening to him. It really got bad and I looked around and my friends were doing the same thing. I felt I had to do something to make this teacher happier so I tried to listen to him as best I could.

One day he was telling us something that was written on the board and I was really listening to him. The girl in back of me saw the teacher looking at me and said, "Look at the teacher, he's looking at Maryrose." They were all laughing at me, but I knew that I was doing the right thing. I continued to try to love him and a friend of mine noticed what I was doing and she tried to do the same. We tried to tell the kids to listen to the teacher and then they really tried.

One Friday we asked the teacher if we could help him during the lunch break and he was really happy. The following Monday there was a school strike and when we returned to school three weeks later that teacher didn't come back. I was glad we had tried to love him and I think he felt our love.

Maryrose
14 years old

One day at school I asked my teacher if I could sharpen my pencils. He said yes but while I was working on it he said that we were going to listen to a report from a couple of my classmates so could he please have all our attention for just a minute. I didn't pay any attention to him; I just went ahead sharpening my pencils.

So then my teacher got a little angry and he asked me to sit down. I was a little upset over this. But then when I got to my desk I realized that I had forgotten to make unity to my teacher and to my fellow students. So after school I apologized to my teacher and he said, "It's OK." I felt really happy after apologizing because I knew that I could start all over again.

Maria Stella
14 years old

One night when my mother and I were coming home in the car, my mom asked me to open up the garage door for her. At first I started to complain but then to love her, I opened it. When she pulled the car in, I started to go inside the house, but then I thought to go the 'extra mile' and shut the garage door too. And so I did to love Jesus in my mom.

Christine
13 years old

No 'extra embellishments', thank you!

One evening, during my "System's Analysis" class, we were assigned a project in which we were to work in teams because—as the teacher explained—"this is the way businesses operate nowadays, analysts work together."

We grouped ourselves into teams of three. Three of us who lived in the same neighborhood chose to work together because we thought we would have more opportunity to meet.

At the class break our little team met together and decided the first thing to do was for each of us to put down all our ideas in an outline form. This happened to be over the Thanksgiving weekend and our outline had to be ready the following Monday. Two of us were not able to accomplish very much that weekend. I, for one, had traveled to another city to visit relatives. The only time I had was during the two-hour flight back. I hastily jotted down some notes and a rough system flow chart.

Another person had used his whole weekend to prepare for the project and came in with thirteen typed pages. We looked it over together and I kept thinking to myself, "But this is all wrong. If I had had more time over the weekend I could have prepared something that would really have shown them how it ought to be done." Even his system flow chart had loose ends according to me. Besides everything else, Ed, being British, wrote in an English that didn't suit my American taste.

Then I had to stop myself, "Wait a minute," I told myself, "you try to live for unity and you know that you should love these neighbors by letting go of your ideas out of love for them. You know that mutual love is more important than having the 'best' project." It was a real struggle for me because I felt I was really right.

We had to meet many times and each one of us had to prepare different parts to the project—charts, diagrams, narration and so on. The three of us came from different business experiences and cultural backgrounds, and quite naturally we each approached the project in a different way. I was determined that I was really going to try to love. When someone proposed something I didn't feel would work I tried to understand their way of thinking. Or when something I prepared didn't seem right to them I tried to listen to their remarks objectively. Together we sought the better way. It was a real effort but our little group was soon working well and we were confident that we had a pretty good project. We even had it typed and ready a week before it was due.

On the last day of classes each group leader was to give a five-minute presentation, as would be done in real life, to a group of management. I was designated as the speaker for our team.

The project was finished, but I kept thinking of other little things I could do to embellish it. During the presentation I could just add some finishing touches to improve it and assure us a good grade.

Our group had tentatively decided to meet, as usual, an hour before class in the cafeteria on the night of the final presentation. I went to our spot and worked there by myself but the others didn't show up. While I was waiting and working alone I felt something wasn't right. In our group we had developed a certain unity. We had shared our opinions and ideas and it had been good to see the fruit of work produced by neighbors working together in unity. There had been a lightness about the work before, and now I felt a heavyness and anxiety. So I decided that when they arrived, just before class, I would ask them what they thought about my ideas and if they didn't think they were necessary then I would foget about my "extra embellishments".

When they arrived they both listened with great enthusiasm; just then the advisor from the registrar's office arrived to say that the teacher wasn't coming and that he was going to collect the projects—there would be no class!

It was an answer from God—that all I had to do was to give a little and he gave the hundredfold. The project was submitted as the three of us had worked on it... and all three of us got A's.

P.D.

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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